Yes, We Have No Havanas

Marita Lorentz Tells Why She Did It

By A.J. Weberman and Gabrielle Schang

Marita Lorentz has had a long history in the American Intelligence community. After working for yearrs for the CIA, the FBI, the Secret Service, the IRS and the Treasury Department she claims that there organiszations used her and that now she is a spy left out in the cold.

She's perhaps best known for her affairs with Fidel Castro and Venezuelan President Jiminez. Because of these links to polictical heavyweights both on the far right and the far left, she has been portrayed by the news media as a femme fatale-Mata Hari type person.

Marita recently made waves when she told the media that her long-time aquaintance and ex-Watergate burgler friend Sturgis admitted to her that he participated in the 1963 assassination of the President, John F. Kennedy. This revelation has been met with skepticism to say the least on the part of the American public and by talking to Marita we were able to shed some light on her character, her personality and her integrity.

Marita, how long did have known Frank Sturgis?

I've known Frank since 1959.

His...real name, what is his real...

Frank Fiorini at that time I knew him as. And he was in the Air Force under Fidel Castro. He was.

In your opinion, is Frank Sturgis a man who is capable fo murder?

Yes.

Capable of murdering a President?

He admitted to me he did. He participated in it.

Can you cite any examples of the cruelty—for something that you will be able to—something you can remember, incidents that showed you that he was a cool, cold blooded type person who would be able to do such a thing?

Well combat, combat training, he was my troop commander and during my gun-running days he was navigating a boat at one time with a load of weapons to take to an island in the Bahamas and we had two Cuban boys with us. I was navigating, Frank was helping. He was covering the guns with plastic. Then these two boys became ill because we were in a squall. No light, no radio contact, no nothing. And they were just, they couldn't help cover the weapons. So Frank got annoyed and they went overboard.

And you believe that he threw them overboard?

I tried to turn the boat, he stopped me. And all these years I've heard those cries of those two boys.

They were crying out for you to help them?

They cried my code name, Alamonita...help me.

You wanted to help?

Of course.

What did Frank Sturgis say to you?

"Keep the boat going straight, straight, straight." And I turned the wheel but he would'nt let me.

So that's the firsthand impression that you have?

Yes.

There's also certain curiosity on the

part of the public about how Sturgis became so close to Castro. How did he win Castro's confidence? His job was Head of Security was it not?

Yes, and he was in charge of the gambling casinos in 1959. but I came to Cuba, the first time I met Fidel, Febuary 28, 1959, and he had been there years before in the Sierra Miestra.

Frank Sturgis?

Fighting alongside Fidel.

What's the story about now Castro came to trust this man?

I really don't know that. That seems to be...well...but he was high in the Air Force and I assume, and I think at one point Frank told me that he was bringing in guns to Fidel while he was in the Sierra Miestra.

Can I tell you what I've read and you can tell me whether or not you heard the same thing or anything like that. I heard he gained the trust and confidence of Fidel Castro by executing at least 50 people..

That's true, I was told by Frank. It was part of his job while he was in the mountains.

You don't think he was just bragging about these things after your experiences with him?

No, no.

How did you meet Frank Sturgis? What were the circumstances of your meeeting such a...

The first time?

Yes, the first time.

I was with Fidel in the Havana Riviera Hotel. Fidel was closing down the gambling casinos. And I was there in uniform with Fidel and Frank edged over to me and said, "I'm with the U.S. Government." I was very suspicious but he tried to strike up a conversation. I said "Stay away from me, Fidel is jealous. Don't talk to me." You know, and he said, "I'm with the Embassy, can I help you?"

Did he think you were a prisoner in the Havana Hilton or something?

I guess so, he wanted to recruit me I guess at that time.

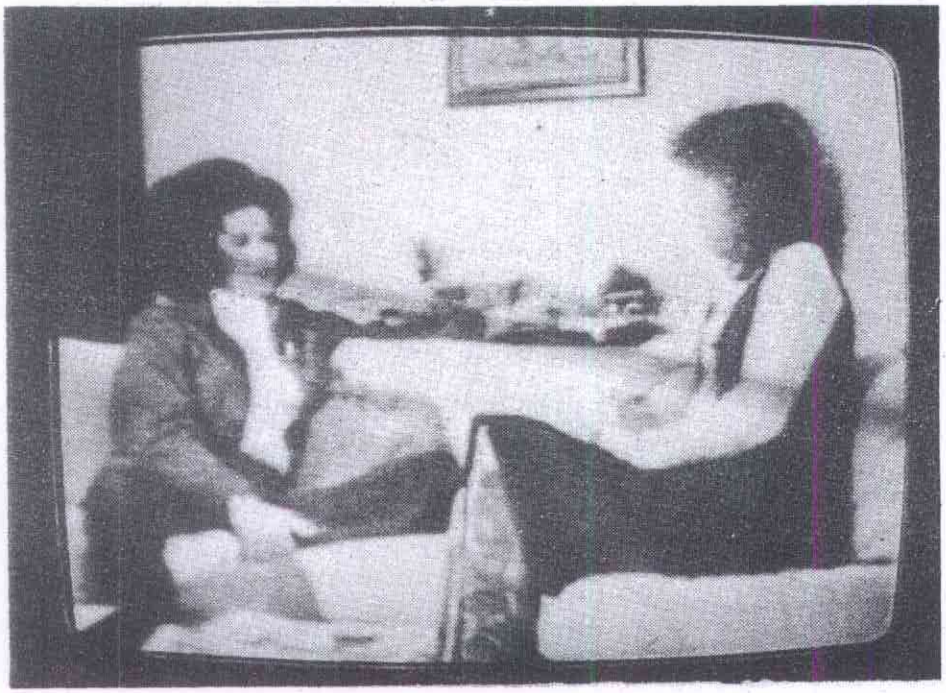
Is that what eventually happened?

Yes.

Did he recruit you?

Yes.

Photo by Alice Torbush



Marita Lorentz (left) and Gabrielle Schang (right) on Cable TV.

Maybe we should find out the story of how you met and fell in love with Fidel Castro and how you were eventually recruited by Sturgis and how you changed your allegiance.

My father is commander of an ocean liner, the M.S. Berlin, and we were going on a cruise to the West Indies. Havana was the last stop. And Fidel, as he told me later standing on the balcony of the Havana Hilton, he saw the ship in the harbor and he took a launch and he boarded the passenger liner in the harbor, with about 35 men and I met him on board.

Your father was a German, is that right?

Yes.

How old were you at the time?

18, just 18.

A little about your own background. Is it true that you are a second generation spy? I mean, were your father and mother involved in intelligence work?

My father and mother both worked for this government.

Is it in fact an accident that you became involved immediately in the top level of spying instead of working your way up the ladder? You've never been trained or anything.

No, I wasn't trained. I fell in love, in 1959, and then one thing led to another and I joined the anti-Castro underground.

Well why did you decide to join the anti-Castro underground if you were in love with Fidel Castro? What happened?

I was pregnant.

By Castro?

Yes. by Fidel. and Fidel had left

Havana and I was alone in the Hilton and I was drugged and the child forceably was aborted.

You were how many months pregnant?

Close to 7 months.

Who do you think is responsible for that forced abortion?

Not Fidel, the people around Fidel.

So the people around Fidel disapproved of your relationship?

Because I was not Cuban, I was an outsider, and Fidel was too close to me.

You became very ill after this forced abortion, correct?

Yes.

You were shipped to New York by Fidel to a hospital?

Frank Fiorini intervened then with Camilo Cienfuegos, Second in Command, and arranged for my escape from Cuba, because I was left to die. And I guess I do owe him my life, Frank Fiorini, Sturgis.

Really.

In 1959, and then I came to New York and to Roosevelt Hospital and was immediately recruited.

How did they go about this recruiting?

Well they...

First of all to which agency...

At the time both.

both what?

FBI and CIA to...

How did they go about recruiting you?

I was recovering and I was to go to the office, the FBI office, so I did. With Alex Rourke, Frank Fiorini, and I went to the FBI office and they said that I was the only one who could get back into Cuba. I was a member of the 26th of July, I had the keys to the Havana Hilton and they asked me to re-enter Cuba to take whatever documents I could and come back out.

Did you accept the asignment?

After much time and—I agreed. Cubana Airlines was stilling running and...

Was it because he thought Fidel had betrayed you?

At the time I was continually told it was Fidel. I know now differently. Fidel is not that type of a person.

Not responsible for you...

...having the abortion.

No.

What do you mean Fidel wasn't that type of person? What type of person was Fidel?

Fidel would not hurt me physically. There was no reason to. Fidel wasn't— isn't brutal. He was nice, he was kind, he was genuine, he taught me a lot. We got along well and there was certainly no reason to do that—for him to do anything like that. And he proved it to me afterwards.

How?

The phone calls right after I was in the United States, by calling me.

I see.

Sending me, send me telegrams to call him back, and you know.

Now you mentioned a man named Alex Rourke. Who is he briefly?

Alex Rourke is the son of a New York judge—son in law of Sherman Billingsly, who was very close with the FBI. He was a—he's a good person. Very good person and he is now presumed deceased.

A lot of people around you, people you've known from 1959 and onward are now dead, are they not?

Yes.

Were you ever asked to kill Castro by the FBI or the CIA through Sturgis or anyone else?

Both agencies.

They did ask you to kill Castro?

Yes.

continued on p.20

Did you ever accept that assignment?

I—went in once, I took out papers, these papers proved to be valuable documents. Aerial photographic views of Cuba. Prospective missile sites. The second time I was asked to kill Fidel. I was driven to Miami with a load of guns from New York and trained for three weeks in a safe house by Frank Ferrini Sturgis.

Trained, finally you were trained as an agent.

I was confined.

What did that make you eligible for? To be an assassin or what?

Well, to-intensive training I guess for three weeks and to poison Fidel.

There has been some speculation about this poisoning in the press and stories about...

Well he's still alive...

...poison in cold cream. What I want to find out is what made you change your mind about killing Fidel. You did at one point have some poison pills on you didn't you?

I was given diline phetamine [?] to stay awake. I was given botulism toxin in capsule form which when I saw the outline from the plane of Cuba I panicked a little because I knew we'd have to go through G–2 at the Jose Marti Airport and I put them in my cold cream and in a blue suitcase. And by the time I got to the Hilton they had melted but Fidel was happy I came back and it just left my mind completely, the training went to waste. It was—it's not in me to kill anybody.

No.

You'd been trained as an assassin but you are not, you have never killed anyone?

No.

About your third big assignment: The General—what is his name?

Marcos Perez Jimenez

He's known as a dictator of sorts of Venezuela.

He was a dictator of Venezuela.

Would you describe your first meeting with this gentleman?

The same people, Alexander Rouk and Frank Fiorini—Sturgis, wanted me to get close to him to gather information. He was supporting the Cuban cause. And I met the dear boy.

Where did you meet him?

In Miami while he was in exile.

He was in jail?

No in exile.

I thought...

Later during the extradition he served nine months.

They put you in a jail cell next to him and that's how you were-and you were told to sidle up to this guy...

That was much later in Venezuela, when I went to Venezuela—political prison.

What did they say to you specificly when they say they want you to become intimate with a man?

No, they just say gather information. But one thing led to the other and he chased me pretty good so between red wine and hanging up my Castro uniform I got involved and I had a charming daughter, Monica.

How old is she now?

She's now 15 years old.

Now, was this a CIA or FBI assignment?

This was CIA.

The General's a very rich man is he not?

Yes, it is reported he's worth $600 million.

Do you think in your opinion, or in your knowledge, actual knowledge, that it is a possibility that the neral supplied some of the money for the very poor anti – Castro forces?

Yes he did, yes he did.

Did he do this knowingly?

Yes of course.

He did this knowingly. About how much money?

I don't know. He would buy supplies. He would give funds. I also heard he sponsored an armed camp in New Orleans which Lee Harvey Oswald attended.

An armed camp. What is that? Where you go...

Military camp, training.

While still on the subject of General Jiminez, I understand, from news reports, I could be wrong, that you are on welfare right now?

Yes, it's amazing.

Well, this man is vey wealthy, didn't he make any arrangement to take care of his child?

I was given $300.000 by the General for my daughter. After he was extradicted back to Venezuela for stealing $13.5 million, his lawyer, David W. Walters, refused to give me any more money from my trust fund. This one trust fund.

On what grounds?

On the ground that he claims I breached a clause in revealing who thw anonymous donor was, even though paternity's esablished. And Mr. Walters by the way is now President Carter's personal envoy to the vatican, not to mention that Mr. Walters tried to have me killed in Miami in 1963.

How do you know he tried to have you killed?

Because he was working together with State's Attorney Richard Gurstein, and they hired one man, Frank Russo from Chicago, who who rented a red Plymouth. I was hiding out in a motel and this man, Frank Russo, tried to run me down. And I was holding the baby in my arms. I rolled over, we were both hurt. But I got the license plate. The license plate was checked out by Detective George Zolla of the Miami Beach Police and it checked back directly to Daid W. Walters and State Attorney Richard Gurstein said that this man was in his employ.

It's quite mind-boggling...

What bothers me is that he is now

President Carter's Personal Envoy to the Vatican.

Well the Vatican is a notoriously corrupt place, isn't it? That is astounding though. Most people...

That's the truth.

...will be intertested to hear that, that's for sure. You had said earlier that you had met Lee harvey Oswald. How well did you know him?

In 1963, when I was running from Mr. Walters crude tactics in Miami I ran back to the only people I knew that would accept me, Which was Frank Fiorini and I was accepted back in. But I had a child so it wasn't quite the same level...as he trained me to be, but I went along. And I gave my daughter to a maid, Willie Mae Taylor. We were going on a trip and I figured this was a good opportunity to talk to Frank about the disappearance of Alex Rourke, and I was under the impression we were going to hit a U.S. armory for weapons. Now this trip was about 10 days or a little over. We were going to Dallas. This was—

This was in 1963.

So I went along, left my little girl, it was on a weekend with a babysitter because I had no funds left. Mr. Walters thought of that. And when we got there I was in the wings.

Photo by Alice Torbush

How many people went on this car trip to Dallas?

Seven.

You were the only woman?

Yes.

Did you know any of the other people?

Yes, Ozzi.

Oswald.

Oswald and Dave Patrick, Pedro Diaz Lanz, Frank Fiorini, two Cuban brothers and Orlandoi Bosch.

Was there anything unusual about this? You said that you thought you were going on a usual hit to...

No—usual hard hit...long trip, and the only thing unusual is when they brought in automatic weapons and put them in between two beds in a motel that we packed into. I said "Why bring weapons when we're going to hit a place?"

I see.

And then a fellow came to the door, I was sitting on the floor eating a bologna sandwich and he said, "Who's she??" Frank opened the door and I later recognized him as Ruby.

Jack Ruby?

Jack Ruby...

The person who shot Lee Harvey Oswald.

I was told that I was in the way. I said "Fine, I'll go home". And Frank drove me to the airport and I flew back ti Miami. I stayed there for a while, and picked up my daughter and went to Fort Lee, home to my mother.

Since you don't know the exact dates of this journey, do you believe you may have been present at a dress rehearsal or the actual...

I don't know—I wonder...

...assassination of Kennedy?

I felt I was a pawn you see. I believe that when they took me that we were going to hit an armory. That when—my purpose was to be a decoy, sit in the car while they went into the armory. Now this is why I believed they took me.

But you felt like a patsy..just as Lee Harvey Osald in this affair?

Yes.

Did you ever hear Frank Fiorini/Sturgis say that he did not like President Kennedy? Did you ever hear him say anything about President Kennedy at all?

After the Bay of Pigs, in which I lost some freinsd too, he also claims he lost a lot of men. It was common for the people, the Cuban colony in Miami to express hate for President Kennedy.

It was, O.K.

Nothing new.

You see, I don't know that, by first-hand knowledge at all.

It was wrong.

You must know that people are saying now, "Why did this woman, who was on the journey so long ago decide to wait until now to say anything." So I'll let you have a chance now to explain, other than... for reasons of publicity...

First of all, Frank has been in constant touch with me for the lst two years. He has sold articles-blown my cover...

In the *Star*?

Right, and he wanted me to participate in several operatyions in New York, politically, and I refused, I refused, and it's my mother's wish, my mother now is dying. I confided to her my doubts, my—in '63 when I came home, and it is her dying wish that I get information to the proper people. As it was, everything got out of hand and...

So if you're cover hadn't been blown you don't think that you would probably be saying this now?

No. And I was threatened a few

times by Frank to say the right things to the Committee.

You were taught, in your training as a spy...

Silence.

Silence exactly. So it has not been the easiest thing for you to come forward and say anything at all. Now, about your life in New York City. Is it true that you were married to a FBI operative here?

I was married to Louis John Uratasis, an assignment husband, at 250 East 87th Street. The Assignment Building. And...

People knew this was an assignment, an FBI assignment?

An FBI assignment.

What's it like to be an FBI wife. What did you do while you and he were married?

A lot of things.

He was super of the building I assume?

Building Manager.

What did you do in that building? Who lived in the building and what were your assignm,ents there?

We had Satellite bloc countries, many, and...

You mean officials from the UN.

UN, diplomat missions.

They lived in the building?

They lived in the building.

And how did you spy on them?

We had a tenant's list and we were the first ones in that building. We would watch them come in and report back and we were told to do certain things. Look-out and information and all that.

Did you ever take pictures of them and all that?

They were taken from across the street.

Did you socialize with them at all?

Yes, in fact I made some very good friends.

What other intelligence agencies have you worked for?

Central Intelligence Agency and numerous others, not narcotics.

What's it like to be a spy? Would you recommend this profession to anyone, would you recommend it, say for your daughter...

continued on p.21

No, because you take a blood oath, you live by a code, your life is not your own.

What's the code, can you say?

Silence and secretive and a certain way of not being personal.

Are you well paid for this?

I should be.

Were you paid well?

I got paid, I got paid but not well.

So it is not a high paying job?

No, and I don't like being called an informant. I am not an informant. I was just assigned to operations.

There is a whole different lingo and you use differeent words...

I never worked for organized crime or narcotics.

Now although, it seems a very scary position that you're in. The fact that you say publicly that you have done intelligence work on the KGB, the anti-Castro forces might not like you too much. Sturgis himself might not want to see you alive too long. Are you afraid for your own life?

I took an oath, and I broke that oath because I think the American people have a right to know and I think their agencies need cleaning up a little bit.

You're willing to take the consequences?

Yes.